

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer comprising:

an ion source for producing ions;

an input vacuum chamber comprising at least one ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide for transmitting said ions, said ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, said apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

an analyzer vacuum chamber comprising an ion mass analyzer disposed to receive ions after they have been transmitted by said ion guide;

at least one differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, said at least one differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber to permit said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber;

at least one alternating current (AC) generator connected to an input chamber reference potential for providing AC potentials to said plurality of electrodes;

wherein:

at least 90% of said apertures are substantially the same size;

at least 90% of said plurality of electrodes forming said ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide are connected to said AC generator in such a way that at any instant during an AC cycle of the output of said AC generator, adjacent ones of said electrodes are supplied respectively with approximately equal positive and negative potentials relative to said input chamber reference potential; and

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wherein said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 0.1 mbar; (ii) ≥ 0.5 mbar; (iii) ≥ 0.7 mbar; (iv) ≥ 1.0 mbar; (v) ≥ 1.3 mbar; (vi) ≥ 1.5 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (ix) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (xi) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xix) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xx) ≥ 1.5 mbar; (xxi) 1-2 mbar; (xxii) 0.5-1.5 mbar; (xxiii) ≤ 20 mbar; and (xxiv) ≤ 30 mbar (vii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (ix) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xi) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xix) 1-5 mbar; (xx) 1-2 mbar; and (xxi) 0.5-1.5 mbar.

2. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said electrodes comprise a plate having an aperture therein.
3. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said electrodes comprise a wire or rod bent to form a substantially closed ring.
4. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein alternate ones of said electrodes are connected to each other and to one of the output connections of a single AC generator.
5. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the AC-only AC ion guide comprises at least 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 electrodes.
6. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said electrodes have internal diameters or dimensions selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 5.0 mm; (ii) ≤ 4.5 mm; (iii) ≤ 4.0 mm; (iv) ≤ 3.5 mm; (v) ≤ 3.0 mm; (vi) ≤ 2.5 mm; (vii) 3.0 ± 0.5 mm; (viii) ≤ 10.0 mm; (ix) ≤ 9.0 mm; (x) ≤ 8.0 mm; (xi) ≤ 7.0 mm; (xii) ≤ 6.0 mm; (xiii) 5.0 ± 0.5 mm; and (xiv) 4-6 mm.

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7. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the length of said AC-only ion guide is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 100 mm; (ii) ≥ 120 mm; (iii) ≥ 150 mm; (iv) 130 ± 10 mm; (v) 100-150 mm; (vi) ≤ 160 mm; (vii) ≤ 180 mm; (viii) ≤ 200 mm; (ix) 130-150 mm; (x) 120-180 mm; (xi) 120-140 mm; (xii) 130 mm $\pm 5, 10, 15, 20, 25$ or 30 mm; (xiii) 50-300 mm; (xiv) 150-300 mm; (xv) ≥ 50 mm; (xvi) 50-100 mm; (xvii) 60-90 mm; (xviii) ≥ 75 mm; (xix) 50-75 mm; (xx) 75-100 mm; (xxi) 150-200 mm; (xxii) ≥ 200 mm; and (xxiii) 50-200 mm.

8. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:
an intermediate vacuum chamber disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber, said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising an AC-only AC ion guide for transmitting ions through said intermediate vacuum chamber, said AC-only AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, the apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

at least one further differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, disposed between said vacuum chambers to allow said intermediate vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber, and said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said intermediate vacuum chamber; and

an alternating current (AC) generator connected to an intermediate chamber reference potential for providing AC potentials to the AC-only AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber.

9. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 8, wherein:
at least 90% of the apertures of the electrodes forming said AC-only AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber are substantially the same size; and

at least 90% of said plurality of the electrodes forming said AC only AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber are connected to the AC generator connected to said intermediate chamber reference potential in such a way that at any instant during an AC cycle of the output of the AC generator, adjacent ones of said electrodes forming said AC only AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber are supplied respectively with approximately equal positive and negative potentials relative to said intermediate chamber reference potential.

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10. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 8, wherein the AC only AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprises at least 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 electrodes.

11. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 8, wherein said intermediate vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) 10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar; (ii) $\geq 2 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iii) $\geq 5 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iv) $\leq 10^{-2}$ mbar; (v) 10^{-3} - 5×10^{-3} mbar; and (vi) 5×10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar.

12. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 8, wherein electrodes forming said AC only AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber have internal diameters or dimensions selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 5.0 mm; (ii) ≤ 4.5 mm; (iii) ≤ 4.0 mm; (iv) ≤ 3.5 mm; (v) ≤ 3.0 mm; (vi) ≤ 2.5 mm; (vii) 3.0 ± 0.5 mm; (viii) ≤ 10.0 mm; (ix) ≤ 9.0 mm; (x) ≤ 8.0 mm; (xi) ≤ 7.0 mm; (xii) ≤ 6.0 mm; (xiii) 5.0 ± 0.5 mm; and (xiv) 4-6 mm.

13. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 8, wherein the length of said ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 100 mm; (ii) ≥ 120 mm; (iii) ≥ 150 mm; (iv) 130 ± 10 mm; (v) 100-150 mm; (vi) ≤ 160 mm; (vii) ≤ 180 mm; (viii) ≤ 200 mm; (ix) 130-150 mm; (x) 120-180 mm; (xi) 120-140 mm; (xii) $130 \text{ mm} \pm 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 \text{ or } 30$ mm; (xiii) 50-300 mm; (xiv) 150-300 mm; (xv) ≥ 50 mm; (xvi) 50-100 mm; (xvii) 60-90 mm; (xviii) ≥ 75 mm; (xix) 50-75 mm; (xx) 75-100 mm; (xxi) 150-200 mm; (xxii) ≥ 200 mm; and (xxiii) 50-200 mm.

14. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion source is an atmospheric pressure ion source.

15. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion source is a continuous ion source.

16. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion source is an Electrospray ("ES") ion source or an Atmospheric Pressure Chemical Ionisation ("APCI") ion source.

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17. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion source is an Inductively Coupled Plasma ("ICP") ion source.

18. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion source is a Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption Ionisation ("MALDI") ion source.

19. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ion mass analyser is selected from the group consisting of: (i) a time-of-flight mass analyser, preferably; (ii) an orthogonal time of flight mass analyser; (iii) a quadrupole mass analyser; and (iv) a quadrupole ion trap.

20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the AC only ion guide comprises two interleaved comb arrangements, each said comb arrangement comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of (i) ≤ 20 mbar; and (ii) ≤ 30 mbar.

22. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the AC only AC ion guide comprises at least one comb arrangement comprising a longitudinally extending member having a plurality of electrodes having apertures depending therefrom.

23. (original) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 22, wherein said input vacuum chamber has a length and said comb arrangement extends at least x% of said length, x% selected from the group consisting of: (i) $\geq 50\%$; (ii) $\geq 60\%$; (iii) $\geq 70\%$; (iv) $\geq 80\%$; (v) $\geq 90\%$; and (vi) $\geq 95\%$.

24. (currently amended) A mass spectrometer comprising:

an ion source for producing ions;

an input vacuum chamber comprising at least one ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide for transmitting said ions, said ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, said apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

Q'ant. an analyzer vacuum chamber comprising an ion mass analyzer disposed to receive ions after they have been transmitted by said ion guide;

at least one differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, said at least one differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber to permit said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber;

wherein:

at least 90% of said apertures are substantially the same size;

at least 90% of said plurality of electrodes forming said ~~AC only~~ AC ion guide are connected to an AC generator; and

wherein said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 0.1 mbar; (ii) ≥ 0.5 mbar; (iii) ≥ 0.7 mbar; (iv) ≥ 1.0 mbar; (v) ≥ 1.3 mbar; (vi) ≥ 1.5 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (ix) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (xi) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xix) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xx) 1-5 mbar; (xxi) 1-2 mbar; (xxii) 0.5-1.5 mbar; (xxiii) ≤ 20 mbar; and (xxiv) ≤ 30 mbar; (vii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (ix) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xi) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xix) 1-5 mbar; (xx) 1-2 mbar; and (xxi) 0.5-1.5 mbar.

25. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the electrodes forming the AC ion guide have a thickness selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 2 mm; (ii) ≤ 1 mm; (iii) $.05 \pm 0.2$ mm; (iv) $.07 \pm 0.1$ mm; and (v) $0.5 - 0.7$ mm.

26. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 24, wherein said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 20 mbar; and (ii) ≤ 30 mbar.

27. (new) A method of mass spectrometry, comprising:

producing ions from an ion source;

transmitting at least some of said ions through an input vacuum chamber comprising at least one AC ion guide for transmitting said ions, said AC ion guide comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, said apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

providing AC potentials to said plurality of electrodes from at least one alternating current (AC) generator connected to an input chamber reference potential;

passing said ions to an analyzer vacuum chamber comprising an ion mass analyzer disposed to receive ions after they have been transmitted by said ion guide;

wherein at least one differential pumping apertured electrode is provided through which ions may pass, said at least one differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber to permit said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber; and

wherein at least 90% of said apertures are substantially the same size and at least 90% of said plurality of electrodes forming said AC ion guide are connected to said AC generator in such a way that at any instant during an AC cycle of the output of said AC generator, adjacent ones of said electrodes are supplied respectively with approximately equal positive and negative potentials relative to said input chamber reference potential;

said method further comprising the step of:

maintaining said input vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 0.1 mbar; (ii) ≥ 0.5 mbar; (iii) ≥ 0.7 mbar; (iv) ≥ 1.0 mbar; (v) ≥ 1.3 mbar; (vi) ≥ 1.5 mbar; (vii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (ix) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xi) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xix) 1-5 mbar; (xx) 1-2 mbar; and (xxi) 0.5-1.5 mbar.

28. (new) A method as claimed in claim 27, further comprising maintaining said input vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 20 mbar; and (ii) ≤ 30 mbar.

29. (new) A method as claimed in claim 27, further comprising:

providing an intermediate vacuum chamber disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber, said intermediate vacuum chamber

comprising an AC ion guide for transmitting ions through said intermediate vacuum chamber, said AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, the apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

providing at least one further differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, disposed between said vacuum chambers to allow said intermediate vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber, and said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said intermediate vacuum chamber; and

providing an alternating current (AC) generator connected to an intermediate chamber reference potential for providing AC potentials to the AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber.

30. (new) A method as claimed in claim 29, further comprising maintaining said intermediate vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of:
(i) 10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar; (ii) $\geq 2 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iii) $\geq 5 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iv) $\leq 10^{-2}$ mbar; (v) 10^{-3} - 5×10^{-3} mbar; and (vi) 5×10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar.

31. (new) A method as claimed in claim 27, further comprising maintaining the AC ion guide having a length L in the input vacuum chamber at a pressure P, wherein the pressure-length product P x L is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 1 mbar cm; (ii) ≥ 2 mbar cm; (iii) ≥ 5 mbar cm; (iv) ≥ 10 mbar cm; (v) ≥ 15 mbar cm; (vi) ≥ 20 mbar cm; (vii) ≥ 25 mbar cm; (viii) ≥ 30 mbar cm; (ix) ≥ 40 mbar cm; (x) ≥ 50 mbar cm; (xi) ≥ 60 mbar cm; (xii) ≥ 70 mbar cm; (xiii) ≥ 80 mbar cm; (xiv) ≥ 90 mbar cm; (xv) ≥ 100 mbar cm; (xvi) ≥ 110 mbar cm; (xvii) ≥ 120 mbar cm; (xviii) ≥ 130 mbar cm; (xix) ≥ 140 mbar cm; (xx) ≥ 150 mbar cm; (xxi) ≥ 160 mbar cm; (xxii) ≥ 170 mbar cm; (xxiii) ≥ 180 mbar cm; (xxiv) ≥ 190 mbar cm; and (xxv) ≥ 200 mbar cm.

32. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 1 wherein, if the AC ion guide has a length L and is maintained in the input vacuum at a pressure P, then the pressure-length product P x L is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 12 mbar cm; (ii) ≥ 2 mbar cm; (iii) ≥ 5 mbar cm; (iv) ≥ 10 mbar cm; (v) ≥ 15 mbar cm; (vi) ≥ 20 mbar cm; (vii) 25 mbar cm; (viii) ≥ 30 mbar cm; (ix) ≥ 40 mbar cm; (x) ≥ 50 mbar cm; (xi) ≥ 60 mbar cm; (xii) ≥ 70 mbar cm; (xiii) ≥ 80 mbar cm; (xiv) ≥ 90 mbar cm; (xv) ≥ 100 mbar cm; (xvi) ≥ 110 mbar cm; (xvii) ≥ 120 mbar cm; (xviii) ≥ 130 mbar cm; (xix) ≥ 140

mbar cm; (xx) \geq 150 mbar cm; (xxi) \geq 160 mbar cm; (xxii) \geq 170 mbar cm; (xxiii) \geq 180 mbar cm; (xxiv) \geq 190 mbar cm; and (xxv) \geq 200 mbar cm.

33. (new) A mass spectrometer comprising:

an ion source for producing ions;
an input vacuum chamber comprising at least one AC ion guide for transmitting said ions, wherein the AC ion guide comprises two interleaved comb arrangements, each said comb arrangement comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures;
an analyzer vacuum chamber comprising a mass analyzer disposed to receive ions after they have been transmitted by said ion guide; and
at least one differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, said at least one differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber to permit said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber.

34. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein at least 90% of said apertures are substantially the same size.

35. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said plurality of electrodes forming said AC ion guide are connected to an AC generator in such a way that at any instant during an AC cycle of the output of said AC generator, adjacent ones of said electrodes are supplied respectively with approximately equal positive and negative potentials relative to an input chamber reference potential.

36. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein each comb arrangement comprises a longitudinally extending member having a plurality of electrodes having apertures depending therefrom.

37. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said input vacuum chamber has a length and said comb arrangements extend at least x% of said length, x% selected from the group consisting of: (i) \geq 50%; (ii) \geq 60%; (iii) \geq 70%; (iv) \geq 80%; (v) \geq 90%; and (vi) \geq 95%.

38. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein alternate ones of said electrodes are connected to each other and to one of the output connections of a single AC generator.

39. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein the AC ion guide comprises at least 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 electrodes.

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40. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said electrodes have internal diameters or dimensions selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 5.0 mm; (ii) ≤ 4.5 mm; (iii) ≤ 4.0 mm; (iv) ≤ 3.5 mm; (v) ≤ 3.0 mm; (vi) ≤ 2.5 mm; (vii) 3.0 ± 0.5 mm; (viii) ≤ 10.0 mm; (ix) ≤ 9.0 mm; (x) ≤ 8.0 mm; (xi) ≤ 7.0 mm; (xii) ≤ 6.0 mm; (xiii) 5.0 ± 0.5 mm; and (xiv) 4-6 mm.

41. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein the length of said AC ion guide is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 100 mm; (ii) ≥ 120 mm; (iii) ≥ 150 mm; (iv) 130 ± 10 mm; (v) 100-150 mm; (vi) ≤ 160 mm; (vii) ≤ 180 mm; (viii) ≤ 200 mm; (ix) 130-150 mm; (x) 120-180 mm; (xi) 120-140 mm; (xii) 130 mm ± 5 , 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 mm; (xiii) 50-300 mm; (xiv) 150-300 mm; (xv) ≥ 50 mm; (xvi) 50-100 mm; (xvii) 60-90 mm; (xviii) ≥ 75 mm; (xix) 50-75 mm; (xx) 75-100 mm; (xxi) 150-200 mm; (xxii) ≥ 200 mm; and (xxiii) 50-200 mm.

42. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, further comprising:

an intermediate vacuum chamber disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber, said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising an AC ion guide for transmitting ions through said intermediate vacuum chamber, said AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, the apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

at least one further differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, disposed between said vacuum chambers to allow said intermediate vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber, and said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said intermediate vacuum chamber; and

an alternating current (AC) generator connected to an intermediate chamber reference potential for providing AC potentials to the AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber.

43. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 42, wherein at least 90% of the apertures of the electrodes forming said AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber are substantially the same size; and

at least 90% of said plurality of the electrodes forming said AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber are connected to the AC generator connected to said intermediate chamber reference potential in such a way that at any instant during an AC cycle of the output of the AC generator, adjacent ones of said electrodes forming said AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber are supplied respectively with approximately equal positive and negative potentials relative to said intermediate chamber reference potential.

44. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 42, wherein the AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprises at least 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 electrodes.

45. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 42, wherein said intermediate vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) 10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar; (ii) $\geq 2 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iii) $\geq 5 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iv) $\leq 10^{-2}$ mbar; (v) 10^{-3} - 5×10^{-3} mbar; and (vi) 5×10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar.

46. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 42, wherein electrodes forming said AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber have internal diameters or dimensions selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 5.0 mm; (ii) ≤ 4.5 mm; (iii) ≤ 4.0 mm; (iv) ≤ 3.5 mm; (v) ≤ 3.0 mm; (vi) ≤ 2.5 mm; (vii) 3.0 ± 0.5 mm; (viii) ≤ 10.0 mm; (ix) ≤ 9.0 mm; (x) ≤ 8.0 mm; (xi) ≤ 7.0 mm; (xii) ≤ 6.0 mm; (xiii) 5.0 ± 0.5 mm; and (xiv) 4-6 mm.

47. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 42, wherein the length of said ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 100 mm; (ii) ≥ 120 mm; (iii) ≥ 150 mm; (iv) 130 ± 10 mm; (v) 100-150 mm; (vi) ≤ 160 mm; (vii) ≤ 180 mm; (viii) ≤ 200 mm; (ix) 130-150 mm; (x) 120-180 mm; (xi) 120-140

mm; (xii) 130 mm \pm 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 mm; (xiii) 50-300 mm; (xiv) 150-300 mm; (xv) \geq 50 mm; (xvi) 50-100 mm; (xvii) 60-90 mm; (xviii) \geq 75 mm; (xix) 50-75 mm; (xx) 75-100 mm; (xxi) 150-200 mm; (xxii) \geq 200 mm; and (xxiii) 50-200 mm.

48. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said ion source is an atmospheric pressure ion source.

49. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said ion source is a continuous ion source.

50. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 48, wherein said ion source is an Electrospray ("ES") ion source or an Atmospheric Pressure Chemical Ionisation ("APCI") ion source.

51. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 48, wherein said ion source is an Inductively Coupled Plasma ("ICP") ion source.

52. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 49, wherein said ion source is an Electrospray ("ES") ion source or an Atmospheric Pressure Chemical Ionisation ("APCI") ion source.

53. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 49, wherein said ion source is an Inductively Coupled Plasma ("ICP") ion source.

54. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said ion source is a Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption Ionisation ("MALDI") ion source.

55. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said ion mass analyser is selected from the group consisting of: (i) a Time of Flight mass analyser, (ii) an orthogonal Time of Flight mass analyser; (iii) a quadrupole mass analyser; and (iv) a quadrupole ion trap.

56. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) \geq 0.1 mbar; (ii) \geq 0.5 mbar; (iii) \geq 0.7 mbar; (iv) \geq 1.0 mbar; (v) \geq 1.3 mbar; (vi) \geq 1.5

mbar; (vii) \geq 2.0 mbar; (viii) \geq 2.5 mbar; (ix) \geq 3.0 mbar; (x) \geq 3.5 mbar; (xi) \geq 4.0 mbar; (xii) \geq 4.5 mbar; (xiii) \geq 5.0 mbar; (xiv) \geq 6.0 mbar; (xv) \geq 7.0 mbar; (xvi) \geq 8.0 mbar; (xvii) \geq 9.0 mbar; (xviii) \geq 10.0 mbar; (xix) 1-5 mbar; (xx) 1-2 mbar; and (xxi) 0.5-1.5 mbar.

57. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein said input vacuum chamber is arranged to be maintained at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) \leq 20 mbar; and (ii) \leq 30 mbar.

58. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein if the AC ion guide has a length L and is maintained in the input vacuum chamber at a pressure P, then the pressure-length product $p \times L$ is selected from the group consisting of: (i) \geq 1 mbar cm; (ii) \geq 2 mbar cm; (iii) \geq 5 mbar cm; (iv) \geq 10 mbar cm; (v) \geq 15 mbar cm; (vi) \geq 20 mbar cm; (vii) \geq 25 mbar cm; (viii) \geq 30 mbar cm; (ix) \geq 40 mbar cm; (x) \geq 50 mbar cm; (xi) \geq 60 mbar cm; (xii) \geq 70 mbar cm; (xiii) \geq 80 mbar cm; (xiv) \geq 90 mbar cm; (xv) \geq 100 mbar cm; (xvi) \geq 110 mbar cm; (xvii) \geq 120 mbar cm; (xviii) \geq 130 mbar cm; (xix) \geq 140 mbar cm; (xx) \geq 150 mbar cm; (xxi) \geq 160 mbar cm; (xxii) \geq 170 mbar cm; (xxiii) \geq 180 mbar cm; (xxiv) \geq 190 mbar cm; and (xxv) \geq 200 mbar cm.

59. (new) A mass spectrometer as claimed in claim 33, wherein the electrodes forming the AC ion guide have a thickness selected from the group consisting of: (i) \leq 2 mm; (ii) \leq 1 mm; (iii) 0.5 ± 0.2 mm; (iv) 0.7 ± 0.1 mm; and (v) 0.5-0.7 mm.

60. (new) A method of mass spectrometry comprising:
producing ions from an ion source;
transmitting at least some of said ions through an input vacuum chamber comprising at least one AC ion guide for transmitting said ions, said AC ion guide comprising two interleaved comb arrangements, each said comb arrangement comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures;
passing said ions to an analyzer vacuum chamber comprising a mass analyzer disposed to receive ions after they have been transmitted by said ion guide;
wherein at least one differential pumping apertured electrode is provided through which ions may pass, said at least one differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber to

permit said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber.

61. (new) A method as claimed in claim 60, wherein each comb arrangement comprises a longitudinally extending member having a plurality of electrodes having apertures depending therefrom.

62. (new) A method as claimed in claim 60, further comprising maintaining said input vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 0.1 mbar; (ii) ≥ 0.5 mbar; (iii) ≥ 0.7 mbar; (iv) ≥ 1.0 mbar; (v) ≥ 1.3 mbar; (vi) ≥ 1.5 mbar; (vii) ≥ 2.0 mbar; (viii) ≥ 2.5 mbar; (ix) ≥ 3.0 mbar; (x) ≥ 3.5 mbar; (xi) ≥ 4.0 mbar; (xii) ≥ 4.5 mbar; (xiii) ≥ 5.0 mbar; (xiv) ≥ 6.0 mbar; (xv) ≥ 7.0 mbar; (xvi) ≥ 8.0 mbar; (xvii) ≥ 9.0 mbar; (xviii) ≥ 10.0 mbar; (xix) 1-5 mbar; (xx) 1-2 mbar; and (xxi) 0.5-1.5 mbar.

63. (new) A method as claimed in claim 60, further comprising maintaining said input vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≤ 20 mbar; and (ii) ≤ 30 mbar.

64. (new) A method as claimed in claim 60, further comprising:

providing an intermediate vacuum chamber disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber, said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising an AC ion guide for transmitting ions through said intermediate vacuum chamber, said AC ion guide arranged in said intermediate vacuum chamber comprising a plurality of electrodes having apertures, the apertures being aligned so that ions travel through them as they are transmitted by said ion guide;

providing at least one further differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, disposed between said vacuum chambers to allow said intermediate vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber, and said analyzer vacuum chamber to be maintained at a lower pressure than said intermediate vacuum chamber; and

providing an alternating current (AC) generator connected to an intermediate chamber reference potential for providing AC potentials to the AC ion guide in said intermediate vacuum chamber.

65. (new) A method as claimed in claim 64, further comprising maintaining said intermediate vacuum chamber at a pressure selected from the group consisting of: (i) 10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar; (ii) $\geq 2 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iii) $\geq 5 \times 10^{-3}$ mbar; (iv) $\leq 10^{-2}$ mbar; (v) 10^{-3} - 5×10^{-3} mbar; and (vi) 5×10^{-3} - 10^{-2} mbar.

66. (new) A method as claimed in claim 60, further comprising maintaining the AC ion guide having a length L in the input vacuum chamber at a pressure P, wherein the pressure-length product $p \times L$ is selected from the group consisting of: (i) ≥ 1 mbar cm; (ii) ≥ 2 mbar cm; (iii) ≥ 5 mbar cm; (iv) ≥ 10 mbar cm; (v) ≥ 15 mbar cm; (vi) ≥ 20 mbar cm; (vii) ≥ 25 mbar cm; (viii) ≥ 30 mbar cm; (ix) ≥ 40 mbar cm; (x) ≥ 50 mbar cm; (xi) ≥ 60 mbar cm; (xii) ≥ 70 mbar cm; (xiii) ≥ 80 mbar cm; (xiv) ≥ 90 mbar cm; (xv) ≥ 100 mbar cm; (xvi) ≥ 110 mbar cm; (xvii) ≥ 120 mbar cm; (xviii) ≥ 130 mbar cm; (xix) ≥ 140 mbar cm; (xx) ≥ 150 mbar cm; (xxi) ≥ 160 mbar cm; (xxii) ≥ 170 mbar cm; (xxiii) ≥ 180 mbar cm; (xxiv) ≥ 190 mbar cm; and (xxv) ≥ 200 mbar cm.

67. (new) A mass spectrometer comprising:

an ion source for producing ions;
an input vacuum chamber incorporating an ion guide for transmitting said ions, said ion guide including a plurality of electrodes having apertures, said apertures being aligned so that the ions travel through the apertures as the ions are transmitted by the ion guide;

an analyzer vacuum chamber incorporating an ion mass analyzer disposed to receive ions transmitted by said ion guide; and

a differential pumping apertured electrode through which ions may pass, said differential pumping apertured electrode being disposed between said input vacuum chamber and said analyzer vacuum chamber, with said analyzer vacuum chamber being maintained at a lower pressure than said input vacuum chamber.

68. (new) The mass spectrometer of claim 67, wherein said analyzer vacuum chamber includes an additional ion guide.

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69. (new) The mass spectrometer of claim 68, wherein said additional ion guide constitutes a pre-filter rod set and said ion mass analyzer constitutes a quadropole mass filter/analyizer.